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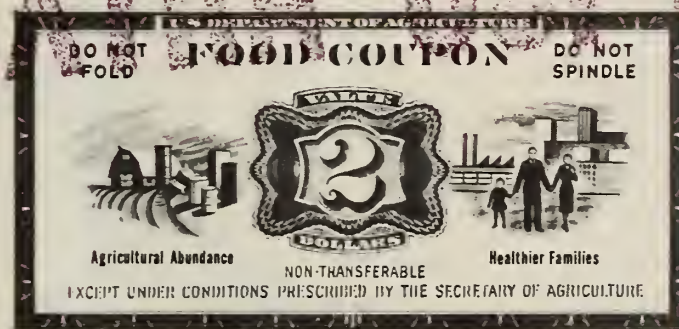
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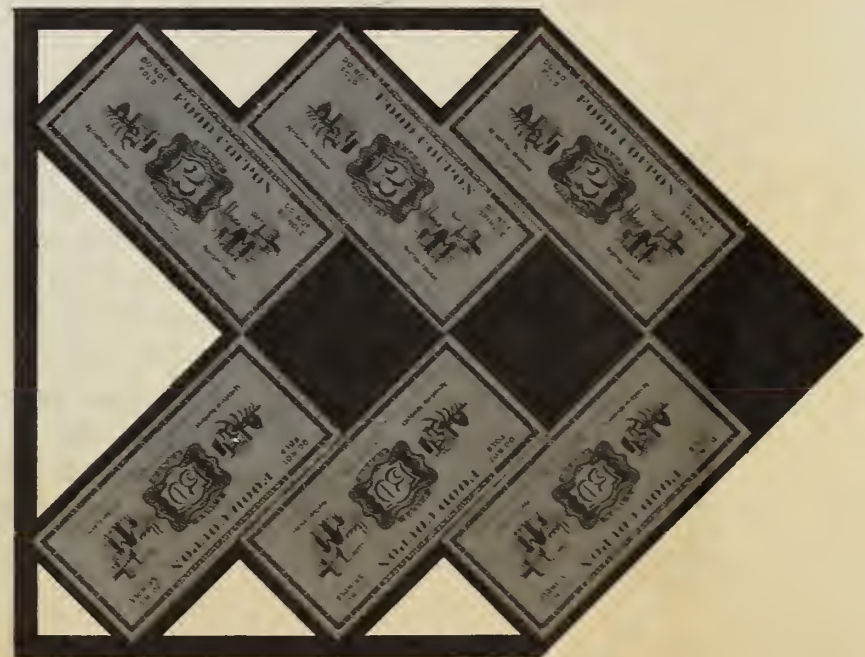
you can help
fight hunger
in America



FOOD STAMP HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE • U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • FNS-1 • REVISED JULY 1973

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FOOD STAMP HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS

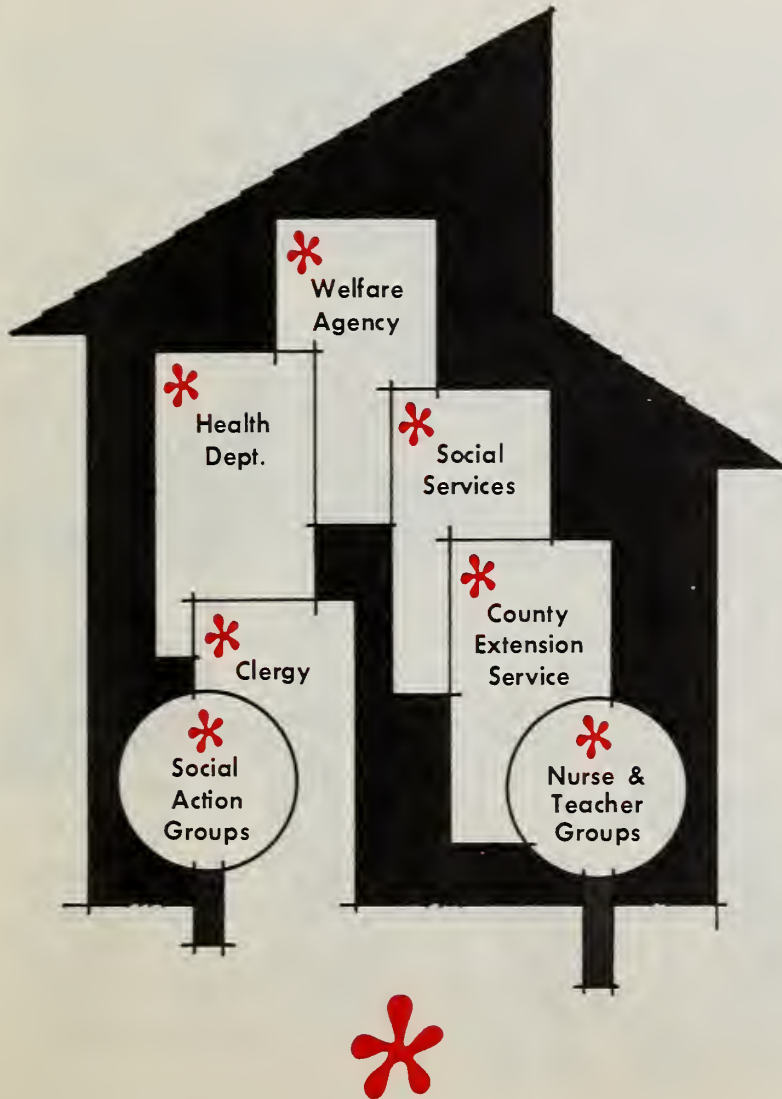
YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBORS have an important role in the campaign to end hunger and malnutrition in America. By helping low-income people get and make good use of the food help available from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, you can contribute greatly to the lives of disadvantaged families in your area and thus to the life of the entire community. American farmers produce plenty of food to provide every American with an adequate diet. The problem is to get it to all low-income people who need it—especially the aged, the disadvantaged, growing children, mothers, and unemployed workers.

For most poor people, food help is close at hand, right in their own communities. All but a few counties have in operation either USDA's **Food Stamp Program** to enable low-income people to buy more food at their local stores, or the **Food Distribution Program** which provides a variety of foods for local distribution to poor families.

The task now is to extend the reach and improve the effectiveness of family food programs. Many poor people are not getting the benefits they should from food help now available to them. Whether it's because of fear, suspicion, lack of motivation, lack of transportation, or physical handicap, there is usually an identifiable reason—a reason that can often be dealt with by concerned citizens of good will who can lend a helping hand. Many individuals and private organizations have asked the USDA what they can do to help, and many are already conducting well-planned service projects to help reach low-income people with the food assistance they need for better diets and better health.

This handbook outlines some of the ways you can help poor people improve their diets, and gives you information and facts about the Food Stamp Program that will be useful to you in your work as a volunteer.

Getting Started



You can make a valuable contribution to the fight against malnutrition in your own community by working individually or as part of a group. But first, find out all about the Food Stamp Program and what others may be doing to help low-income families with their food problems. Here are some ideas for getting started:

1. Get in touch with your local welfare agency to find out about the operation of the Food Stamp Program, and what volunteers can do to help. The telephone number of the agency is listed in the same section of the directory as other departments of your county and city government.
2. Find out what other volunteers are doing to help. You can get leads from:
 - The local welfare and health departments.
 - The listing of social service organizations in the yellow pages of your telephone directory.

- The County Extension Service. The telephone number should be listed along with other offices of local government.
 - Clergymen and other church leaders, nurses, teachers, and the various social action groups.
3. Make personal visits to volunteer activities to get a first-hand view and find out what additional help may be needed. Volunteers can serve the Food Stamp Program by:
- Acting as language interpreters.
 - Providing transportation to and from the food stamp office or grocery stores.
 - Visiting applicants to assure that all of the necessary documents are available to the eligibility caseworker.
 - Assisting clients in filling out their application forms.
 - Acting as an authorized representative for households burdened by some kind of physical handicap.
 - Manning food stamp information booths.
 - Operating "Meals-on-Wheels" Centers.
 - Assisting local, State, and Federal agencies in carrying out emergency functions during a disaster situation.
4. If you decide on a project that's new to your community, consider these questions:
- What support can you get from others, including local officials and leaders of voluntary groups?
 - How does your project tie in with what other groups are doing?
 - Will there be an overlap or duplication?
5. Find out if your area has a training program for volunteers. Is there a system to coordinate and direct their efforts? Food Stamp Program regulations now require that each participating State operate a Food Stamp Outreach Program. One concept of this program is to provide motivation and incentive to private and volunteer groups and individuals for the purpose of enlisting their services to carry out specific outreach activities. The State outreach people may be contacted through the local food stamp or welfare office.
- Another good source for additional volunteer information is the **National Center for Voluntary Action**, 1755 Eye Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20006, an agency which promotes and organizes efforts of government, volunteer groups and individual volunteers.



Volunteer Roles

In general, volunteers and community organizations can be most effective by devoting their capabilities and resources to activities that fit into five major interrelated categories:

- Outreach
- Direct Help
- Food Education
- Money
- Community Support

Here are things that can be and are being done by volunteers and groups of volunteers. Their actions can be the starting point for you.

Outreach

In Tappahannock, Virginia, a newspaperwoman who does volunteer work at a hospital seeks out patients whose illnesses appear to be related to nutrition and tells them about the USDA food assistance that may be available in their home county. When they are discharged, she follows up and helps them apply for food stamps or donated foods.

Many poor people, because of isolation, suspicion, ignorance, or apathy do not know that food help is available. Or, if they do know, they do not know how to go about getting it.

Informing and motivating the malnourished is a vital need. Volunteers can make assigned home visits to public assistance households, prepare posters and exhibits, and operate information booths in grocery stores, employment agencies, welfare offices, health clinics, churches, neighborhood centers, and other places where people gather.

Direct Help

In Adair County, Kentucky, a volunteer transports food stamp users to the issuance office in Columbia and then takes them to the grocery store. In Detroit, Michigan, a volunteer—designated as an authorized representative—purchases food stamps for a number of elderly persons in the Herman Garden Public Housing Project.

Transportation is frequently a problem to low-income people, particularly the elderly and disabled, and those in rural areas. Volunteers can provide trans-

portation, or they can shop and deliver food to shut-ins or people who are ill. Other services might include baby-sitting while mothers get food stamps or shop, provide clerical assistance for understaffed certification offices, and help prepare meals for the children when a low-income parent is either sick or hospitalized.

In addition, the voluntary efforts of concerned individuals and organizations can be particularly helpful in disaster situations. Their assistance during such emergencies can do much to increase the speed with which families who have been affected by a disaster get the food help they need. The assistance volunteers provide will complement the services of disaster relief agencies, such as the American National Red Cross, Salvation Army and National Guard.

Food Education

In Ingham County, Michigan, a group of about 100 volunteers have what they call a "family-to-family program." The volunteers help their assigned families in all facets of daily living, including housekeeping, money management, shopping, meal planning and food preparation.

Too frequently, poor people use the added buying power of food stamps to **buy more** of the same inadequate diets they've been getting. Food education in the proper use of meager resources is paramount. Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as private organizations, conduct educational programs that need the helping hand and the know-how of qualified volunteers. Such educational activities are conducted at food stamp certification and issuance offices, grocery stores, neighborhood centers, and person-to-person in homes. In most communities, there exists the framework of such efforts into which volunteers can fit in many roles—including baby-sitting so that mothers can attend a food demonstration.

Community Support

Federal food help programs ordinarily operate through State and local governmental agencies. Therefore, public support and community understanding are vital.

Volunteers—people who care—can find and point out the need in communities not yet fully committed to combatting malnutrition. The voices of well-informed citizens can spell the difference between an enlightened

attack on a community problem and an illusory belief that there is no problem.

Money

In Yazoo City, Mississippi, the First Baptist Church set up a "care fund" for food stamp recipients. Contributions solicited from church members are kept in a separate account at the local bank. The director of the county welfare department is authorized to draw on the account at any time to help needy people meet their food stamp purchase requirement. No criteria are specified by the church. The Lions Club of Jasper, Alabama, maintains a fund to purchase food stamps in cases of illness or other emergencies that arise in poor families.

Money for food-related activities can be provided by voluntary agencies and community organizations, both from contributions of members and from fund-raising activities. In addition to direct help to destitute individuals and families, money can be used for printing outreach and educational flyers, providing food for demonstrations on preparing a nutritious meal and other informational material.



This Is the Food Stamp Program

There have been reams of information—and lots of misinformation—written about the Food Stamp Program. The program was made possible by the Food Stamp Act of 1964.

Here's what it's all about—

- The Federal Government gives extra food buying power to low-income families who decide to spend a specified amount of their own money—for Federal food coupons (usually called “food stamps.”) Families with little or no income do not have a purchase requirement and get their stamps free—see “Food Stamp Facts . . . Allotments and Purchase Requirements” (FNS-70). The face value of the total stamps they get is greater than the amount of money they put in. That means extra food buying power.

- Some terminology you will hear: The amount of money the family converts to stamps is called the “purchase requirement.” It is based on the family’s net income level and the number of people in the family. The difference between the money they put in and the total value of stamps they get is called the “bonus.”
- By law, the program is operated through State and local welfare agencies, even though food stamps are by no means limited to people on welfare. You may find some people who would qualify for food stamps but just won’t apply because of the “welfare” implications. Remind them that about 40 percent of the people who do use food stamps are **not** receiving any public assistance money.
- In order for a household to be eligible for food stamps, all able-bodied members (with certain exceptions) must register for and accept suitable employment. For further information, see “Food Stamp Facts . . . Work Registration” (FNS-71).
- Food stamps are spent in retail food stores to buy almost any food the customer chooses, at prevailing prices. But they can be used only for food—no soap, or cigarettes, or other nonfood items com-

monly sold in food stores. Certain imported foods, labeled as imported, cannot be bought with food stamps. But coffee, tea, cocoa, and bananas—**although imported**—may be bought with the stamps.

- In communities where it is available, a nonprofit meal delivery service, commonly called “Meals-On-Wheels,” may be authorized by USDA to deliver meals to food stamp recipients, aged 60 or over, who are physically handicapped, feeble, or cannot prepare all their meals. Recipients may use all or a portion of their stamps to pay for such meals.
- What most people refer to as a “family” becomes a “household” under the Food Stamp Program. A food stamp household is a group of people who buy, prepare, and eat their meals together. A single individual can be a “household” if he prepares and eats his food at home, even if “home” is one room.
- Residents of an institution or boarding house cannot be considered a “household” and are not eligible for food stamps.
- It’s the total net income of all members of the household (except that of students under 18 years old) that determines whether the household quali-

fies for food stamps. The income may be from welfare checks, pensions, Social Security, odd jobs, farming and/or other sources. If the total income is below the national eligibility standards, then the household probably can get food stamps. See "Food Stamp Facts . . . Eligibility Requirements" (FNS-72).

- As a volunteer, you can help the "head of the household" apply for food stamps by explaining the kinds of records he or she should take to the certification office. This can be especially helpful to people who are not on welfare and not familiar with application formalities. Anyone applying for food stamps will be required to show:

1. How many people are in the household:

Usually, just the applicant's statement, giving names and ages of members of the household is acceptable.

2. How much income the household has:

Households in which all the members are receiving welfare are automatically eligible for food stamps, without regard to income and resources. For everyone else, income is the key in determining eligibility, the purchase requirement, and bonus for food stamps. It may also be the hardest thing

to pin down unless the applicant knows what papers will be needed. Pay slips, showing wages and deductions, for all working members of the household are the best records. If pay slips are not available, statements from the applicant's employer are acceptable. Perhaps an elderly parent is part of the household. Remember that this person's Social Security check must be counted as part of the total income. Other kinds of income include veteran's benefits, unemployment compensation, Civil Service or railroad retirement, support or alimony payments. Most people have records of these—it's a matter of remembering to bring them to the food stamp office.

3. Household Income Deductions:

In order to determine a household's eligibility, certain deductions are made from the household's income. These deductions include mandatory items, such as income taxes and union dues, and such hardship expense as shelter, child care, and medical costs. "Food Stamp Facts . . . Household Income Deductions" (FNS-74) illustrates the manner in which deductions are made.

Food Stamp Rights and Responsibilities



The Food Stamp Program in your community did not just happen. Officials in the Federal and State governments had to agree. The agreement sets out certain rights and responsibilities. Every citizen is entitled to know exactly what these rights are.

Civil Rights

No person shall, because of race, religious creed, color, sex, national origin or political beliefs be excluded from participation in, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under the Food Stamp Program. Food stamps are for all people who qualify.

Right to Privacy

All States have laws and regulations protecting the confidential nature of records and rights of individuals benefitting from food stamps. Some of the questions to be answered in getting food stamps are personal. So the records are confidential and are used **only** for making a decision on whether a household can get food stamps, and, if so, how many and how much.

Right to be Heard

Each State welfare department has a method of reviewing appeals by people who feel they have been improperly denied benefits. It is called a "Fair Hearing" and must be given prompt and final action by the State within 60 days from the date of the request for a hearing.

Complaints against food stores which are related to food stamps should be directed to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Office for the county or area.

Responsibilities

Participants must promptly report changes which

could affect eligibility or purchase requirement and amount of bonus stamps. Why report changes in number of household, income, rent, or deductions? Because these are the things that can make the difference in the amount paid for stamps and the bonus. If the family gets bigger, they need more food stamps. If a member of the family leaves home, they need less.

Crimes and Offenses

Food stamps and the Authorization to Purchase cards (the documents used by the recipient to obtain food stamps, commonly called the ATP card) are obligations of the United States. Any unauthorized use of these documents may result in prosecution under Section 14 of the Food Stamp Act. Penalties range from one to ten years imprisonment or fines of \$5,000 to \$10,000, or both.

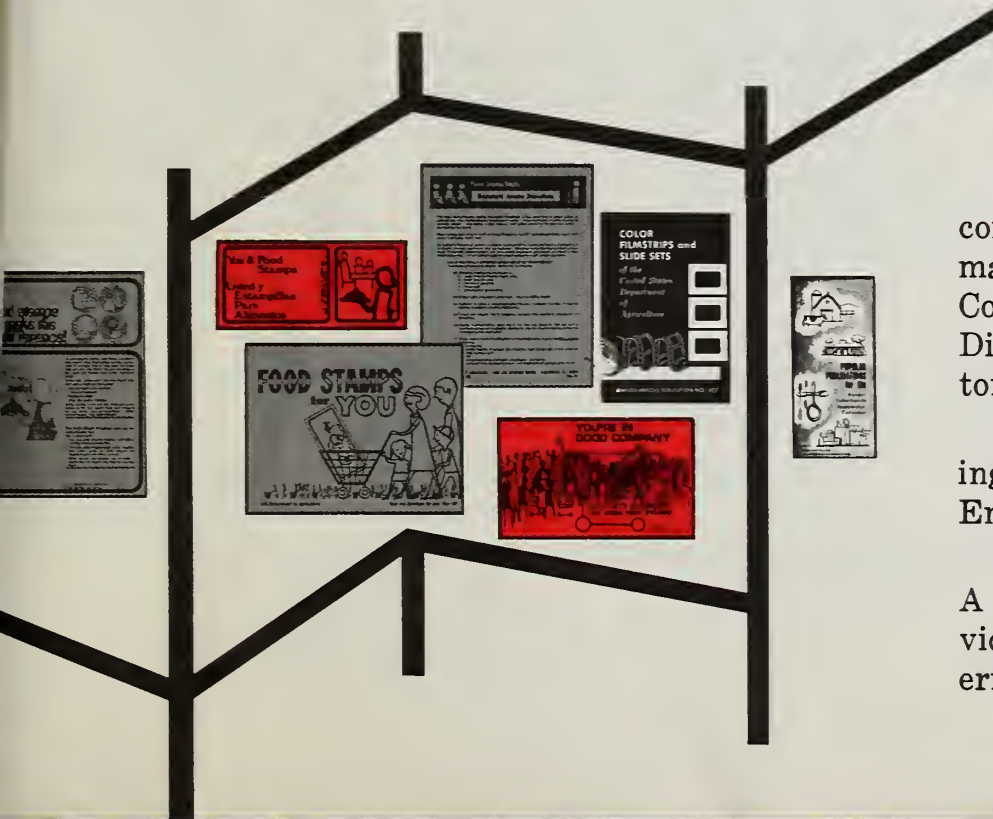
USDA's Role

The State welfare department administers the Food Stamp Program at the local level, but national supervision of the program is by the Food and Nutrition Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

For More Information:

You may contact the local USDA Food and Nutrition Service Office located in or near every food stamp county. You will find the address or telephone number listed under U. S. Government Offices. If you prefer, you may contact the nearest regional office listed on page 15 of this booklet.

Resource Material



There are many good sources of material for use in community outreach programs. Here is a list of printed material available for food stamp outreach activities. Copies are free upon request by writing Food Stamp Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

- **Food Stamps and You (FNS-5)**: A folder containing general food stamp information printed in both English and Spanish.
- **Food for Emergencies and Disasters (FNS-66)**: A leaflet describing the type of food help available to victims of disasters and the role of State and local governments.

● **Food Stamps For You (FNS-67):** A flip chart booklet in both English and Spanish explaining the Food Stamp Program in general terms. It is designed for use by community volunteer outreach workers on a person to person basis.

● **Food Stamp Facts:** A series of information sheets, in both English and Spanish, containing specific information on the major provisions of the program in question-and-answer form:

Allotments and Purchase Requirements (FNS-70)

Work Registration (FNS-71)

Eligibility Requirements (FNS-72)

Fair Hearing (FNS-73)

Household Income Deductions (FNS-74)

Meals-On-Wheels (FNS-75)

Recipient Responsibility (FNS-76)

Disaster Situations (FNS-99)

● **Food Stamp Program (FNS-77):** A general information leaflet on the program available in English, Spanish and Yiddish.

● **You're In Good Company—Millions of Americans Use USDA Food Stamps (PA-922):** A booklet describing some of the responsibilities and obligations of a newly certified food stamp recipient.

● **Food Stamps Make the Difference (PA-952):** An information leaflet on the program designed for possible use as a mailer to potential recipients.

Other USDA materials are available. Single copies of the following catalogues can be obtained free upon request.

● **Publications of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS-11):** Address your request to the Information Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

● **Popular Publications (List No. 5):** General information for the farmer, suburbanite, homemaker, and consumer. Address your request to the Office of Communication, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

● **Color Filmstrips and Slide Sets (MP-1107):** Address your request to Photography Division, Office of Communication, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

● **Motion Pictures (AH-14):** Address your request to the Motion Picture Service, Distribution Branch, Office of Communication, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

● **Exhibits:** To obtain information on USDA exhibits, write to the Chief of the Exhibit Service, Office of Communication, USDA, Washington, D. C. 20250.

Other good sources of material may be obtained from the County Extension Office and your State Land-Grant College or University.

For More Information

For additional information on the Food Stamp Program contact the Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office nearest you.

Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
729 Alexander Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08550

(New York, Maryland, Connecticut,
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Pennsylvania, New Hampshire,
Rhode Island, Maine, New Jersey,
Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia)

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